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L'ALLEGRO.

HENCE, loathed Melancholy,
Of Cerberus and blackest Midnight born,
In Stygian cave forlorn,

'Mongst horrid shapes, and shrieks, and sights unholy;
Find out some uncouth cell,
Where brooding Darkness spreads his jealous wings,
And the night-raven sings;
There under ebon shades, and low-brow'd rocks,
As ragged as thy locks,
In dark Cimmerian desert ever dwell.

But come, thou goddess fair and free,
In heaven yclep'd Euphrosyne,
And by men, heart-easing Mirth,
Whom lovely Venus at a birth,
With two sister Graces more,
To ivy-crowned Bacchus bore;
Or whether (as some sager sing)
The frolic wind that breathes the spring,
Zephyr with Aurora playing,
As he met her once a maying,
There on beds of violets blue,
And fresh-blown roses wash'd in dew,
Fill'd her with thee a daughter fair,
So buxom, blithe, and debonair.

Haste thee, nymph, and bring with thee
Jest, and youthful Jollity,

Quips, and cranks, and wanton wiles,
Nods, and becks, and wreathed smiles,
Such as hang on Hebe's cheek,

And love to live in dimple sleek;
Sport that wrinkled Care derides,
And Laughter holding both his sides.

Come and trip it as you go
On the light fantastic toe ;
And in thy right hand lead with thee

The mountain-nymph, sweet Liberty :
And, if I give thee honour due,
Mirth, admit me of thy crew,

To live with her, and live with thee,
In unreproved pleasures free :
To hear the lark begin his flight,
And singing startle the dull night,
From his watch-tow'r in the skies,
Till the dappled dawn doth rise ;

Then to come, in spite of sorrow,
And at my window bid good-morrow,
Thro' the sweet-briar, or the vine,
Or the twisted eglantine :
While the cock with lively din
Scatters the rear of darkness thin,

And to the stack, or the barn door,
Stoutly struts his dames before :
Oft list'ning how the hounds and horn
Cheerly rouse the slumbering morn,

From the side of some hoar hill,
Thro' the high wood echoing shrill
Sometimes walking not unseen
By hedge-row elms, on hillocks green,

Right against the eastern gate,
Where the great sun begins his state,

Robed in flames, and amber light,
The clouds in thousand liveries dight;
While the ploughman near at hand

Whistles o'er the furrow'd land,
And the milk-maid singeth blithe,
And the mower whets his scythe,

And every shepherd tells his tale,
Under the hawthorn in the dale.

Straight mine eye hath caught new pleasures,
Whilst the landscape round it measures;

Russet lawns, and fallows grey,
Where the nibbling flocks do stray;
Mountains, on whose barren breast

The labouring clouds do often rest;
Meadows trim with daisies pied:
Shallow brooks, and rivers wide:

Towers and battlements it sees
Bosom'd high in tufted trees,
Where perhaps some beauty lies,
The Cynosure of neighbouring eyes.

Hard by a cottage-chimney smokes,
From betwixt two aged oaks,

Where Corydon and Thyrsis met,
Are at their savoury dinner set

Of herbs, and other country-messes,
Which the neat-handed Phyllis dresses;
And then in haste her bower she leaves,
With Thestylis to bind the sheaves;

Or, if the earlier season lead,
To the tann'd haycock in the mead.

Sometimes, with secure delight,
The upland hamlets will invite,

When the merry bells ring round,
And the jocund rebecks sound

To many a youth and many a maid,
Dancing in the chequer'd shade ;

And young and old come forth to play
On a sunshine holiday,
Till the livelong daylight fail;

Then to the spicy nut-brown ale,
With stories told of many a feat,
How Fairy Mab the junkets eat;

She was pinch'd, and pull'd, she said,
And he by friar's lantern led;
Tells how the drudging Goblin sweat

To earn his cream-bowl duly set,
When in one night, ere glimpse of morn,
His shadowy flail had thresh'd the corn,

That ten day-labourers could not end,
Then lays him down the lubber fiend,
And, stretch'd out all the chimney's length,
Basks at the fire his hairy strength ;

And cropful out of doors he flings
Ere the first cock his matin rings.
Thus done the tales, to bed they creep,
By whispering winds soon lull'd to sleep.

Tower'd cities please us then,
And the busy hum of men,
Where throngs of knights, and barons bold,
In weeds of peace high triumphs hold,

With store of ladies, whose bright eyes
Rain influence, and judge the prize
Of wit or arms, while both contend
To win her grace whom all commend.

There let Hymen oft appear
In saffron robe, with taper clear,
And pomp, and feast, and revelry,
With mask and antique pageantry,

Such sights as youthful poets dream
On summer eves by haunted stream.
Then to the well-trod stage anon,
If Johnson's learned sock be on,

Or sweetest Shakespeare, Fancy's child,
Warble his native wood-notes wild.

And ever, against eating cares,
Lap me in soft Lydian airs,

Married to immortal verse,
Such as the melting soul may pierce
In notes, with many a winding bout
Of linked sweetness long drawn out,

With wanton heed, and giddy cunning,
The melting voice thro' mazes running;
Untwisting all the chains that tie
The hidden soul of Harmony;
That Orpheus's self may heave his head
From golden slumber on a bed

Of heap'd Elysian flowers, and hear
Such strains as would have won the ear
Of Pluto, to have quite set free
His half-regain'd Eurydice.

These delights, if thou canst give,
Mirth, with thee I mean to live.

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